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Venezuela: Social Christian Official Repudiates Coup Attempt

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[Statement by Eduardo Fernandez, secretary general of the Social Christian Party, COPEI -- live, broadcast in progress]

[Text] ...emphatic repudiation of the act, that force that seeks to violate the Constitution, the law, and the Venezuelan people's commitment to democracy. With firm serenity, I emphatically condemn this act. I have been in contact with the head of state, the president of the Republic. I talked to him just a few minutes ago. I want to call on the entire country to repudiate this act of violence. Venezuela has an unremitting commitment to democracy. We do not want, in any way, to have our problems resolved by force. We want our problems to be resolved in a civic, democratic manner.

I wish to express my solidarity with the country's institutions, and the solidarity of the Social Christian Party, COPEI, and the entire Venezuelan nation.

I wish to make a special appeal to the soldiers of the Republic, to the Armed Forces officers at all levels: You are duty bound to obey the national Constitution. No order from any officer of any rank can attempt to invalidate the oath of loyalty that all soldiers have sworn to the national Constitution. Venezuela's international prestige demands from us at this time an attitude that is very firm, full of solidarity, nationalistic, and patriotic. We must defend the national Constitution. In a democracy, problems are resolved with votes, not bullets.

I emphatically repudiate this act of force and call on all Venezuelans to unite in defense of the Constitution, the institutions, and the law. The head of state has just said, in an address broadcast on television, that he has the country's solidarity and support. I want to confirm this. The entire country supports the Constitution, the law, and the institutions as reflected in the stability of the head of state's mandate.

Venezuela is a civilized nation, and as such, we have to repudiate those who attempt to disrupt the constitutional and legal systems by force.

I call for all Venezuelans to be calm. I have received information that military commanders are fully respecting and defending the national Constitution. The feeling of the overwhelming majority of the Armed Forces and the Venezuelan people is that

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